

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, CHESTNUT HILL BRANCH
8711 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6750
PA-6750

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, CHESTNUT HILL BRANCH

HABS No. PA-6750

Location: 8711 Germantown Ave (at Bethlehem Pike), Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: City of Philadelphia

Present Occupant: Free Library of Philadelphia

Present Use: Chestnut Hill branch library

Significance: Chestnut Hill was one of twenty-five branch libraries constructed between 1904 and 1930 by the Free Library of Philadelphia using a \$1.5 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Andrew Carnegie's public library construction grants were a major impetus for the growth of these institutions throughout the country. Philadelphia was second only to New York City in the size of its Carnegie grant and number of branch libraries constructed. Each jurisdiction receiving Carnegie library funds was responsible for providing a site and operating expenses equal to ten percent of the cost of construction. Prior to receiving the Carnegie funds in 1903, branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia (founded 1891) were housed in a variety of preexisting structures. The Carnegie library construction campaign provided twenty-five purpose-built branch libraries for the City of Philadelphia, each designed within the current ideal of efficient operation and using fashionable, but conservative, architectural forms and motifs.

Chestnut Hill was the eighth Carnegie branch library built. It was designed by the prominent local firm of Cope and Stewardson using symmetrical, Georgian Revival forms and motifs and the gray random ashlar stone characteristic of local building traditions. This library still serves the affluent neighborhood of Chestnut Hill on the northern edge of the city of Philadelphia as part of the Free Library system.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

1. Date of erection: 1906-08, cornerstone September 13, 1906, opened January 22, 1909¹
2. Architect: Cope and Stewardson

¹ The Chestnut Hill Branch was complete and fully functional by mid-1908, but officially opening a new branch required a Philadelphia City Council ordinance.

3. Original and subsequent owners/uses: Free Library of Philadelphia branch library, 1909 to present.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:² J.S. Cornell and Son, general contract, \$30,129
Roberts Leinau, heating and ventilating, \$4,574
D'Olier Engineering, electric lighting, \$1,570

5. Original plans and construction: The firm of Cope and Stewardson designed the Chestnut Hill branch library during 1906 and construction proceeded during 1907-1908. Architectural drawings have not been located for this structure beyond an elevation rendering published in the newspaper.

6. Alterations and additions: The library retains its original appearance on the exterior with the exception of the addition extending from the rear façade built in 1991. The interior spaces are largely intact but with changes in shelving, lighting and other fixtures.

B. Historical Context:

In the nineteenth century most libraries in the United States were private or available only to subscribers. Starting in the late nineteenth century, many cities began to found “free library” systems with the goal of providing educational material and services to a wider array of citizens, particularly the burgeoning immigrant population. The Free Library of Philadelphia was founded in 1891 and proceeded to establish a central library and a network of neighborhood branches. Despite ambitious goals, however, these libraries remained rather modest affairs housed in rented space and utilizing mainly donated collections and volunteer staffing.

During this same period the library construction philanthropy of wealthy industrialist Andrew Carnegie would have a profound effect on both the development of professional library standards and the evolution of the building type. The Free Library of Philadelphia received a \$1.5 million grant in January 1903 from Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Corporation to build thirty branch libraries.³ Carnegie had been engaged in library building philanthropy since 1886, but the program was expanded to jurisdictions outside of his personal and business sphere only in 1898. Carnegie library historian George Bobinski calls this later period the “wholesale phase” of Carnegie’s library philanthropy. From 1898 to 1919, he gave over \$39 million to 1,406 communities. The unprecedented scale of this effort contrasts with the “retail phase” between 1886 and 1898 when Carnegie donated \$1.8 million to six communities.⁴ The \$1.5 million gift

² Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (28 December 1906).

³ While the original grant stipulated funding for 30 libraries at \$50,000 each, rising construction costs caused the number to be scaled back in 1918. For the remaining branches, the Carnegie fund provided only part of the construction cost with the city or neighborhood groups making up the difference. See letter from Librarian John Ashhurst to James Bertram, Secretary, Carnegie Corporation officially changing the total number of Carnegie branches to “25 or 26,” (11 October 1918), Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

⁴ George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), 13-14.

to Philadelphia's fledgling free library system was quite generous. Only New York City, which received a \$5.2 million grant for sixty-six libraries in 1899, built more branches using Carnegie funds. The next largest grants went to Baltimore and Cleveland; each city built fourteen libraries.⁵

In Philadelphia there was a delay while the various government agencies worked out a mechanism to legally accept and administer such unprecedented largesse. According to Bobinski, "the Pennsylvania State legislature had to approve an act authorizing the Philadelphia city council to enter into contracts with the trustees of the public library so that the arrangements necessary for receiving the Carnegie gift could be carried into effect."⁶ After a year of bureaucratic maneuvering, the state legislature finally passed the law enabling the city to officially accept the gift. The final step before the Free Library could proceed was an ordinance approving this arrangement passed by Mayor John Weaver in January 1904. John Thomson quickly sent a letter to James Bertram, Carnegie's personal secretary and gatekeeper for the library philanthropy program, expressing his relief that the Free Library could move forward with branch construction:

I have the pleasure of informing you that I have this morning received from the Clerk of Councils official notice that the Mayor has signed the Ordinance accepting Mr. Carnegie's splendid gift to the City of Philadelphia. The matter has been one of great anxiety. . . . Arrangements are on foot to accept 4 or 5 sites and it is hoped that the preliminary arrangements for locating the system of Branch Libraries, made possible by Mr. Carnegie's munificence, will be put in active motion at once. . . . I think we shall be able very rapidly to show our appreciation of what Mr. Carnegie has put it in our power to do.⁷

The year-long delay in officially accepting the gift gave the Free Library time to quietly prepare to construct new branch buildings and move rapidly once approval came. Carnegie did not specify architectural designs or review plans at this time, but he did express a strong preference that the branch libraries include lecture rooms.⁸ In a letter officially accepting Carnegie's gift, Free Library Board of Trustees President Joseph G. Rosengarten noted that the Trustees "concur[red] fully" with his lecture room suggestion and planned to expand the already successful Free Library lecture program.⁹

Beyond a general desire for new branch buildings and an interest in including lecture rooms, it is not clear what guidelines or models informed the Free Library as they developed a fairly consistent branch library plan for their city. When Philadelphia received its Carnegie grant

⁵ Bobinski 229, 231.

⁶ Bobinski 44.

⁷ Letter, John Thomson to James Bertram (13 January 1904), Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

⁸ "Carnegie Offers \$1,500,000 to City," *Philadelphia Times*, 7 January 1903, clipping in Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

⁹ Letter, J. G. Rosengarten to Andrew Carnegie, (5 March 1904), Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

in 1903 there was no official design review by Carnegie or his staff. By 1908 Carnegie's secretary James Bertram had to approve the building plans for all new grants. The Carnegie publication "Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings" [sic.] was first issued in 1911 by Bertram.¹⁰ While the Philadelphia branch library plans progressed independent of Carnegie design oversight, it appears both were developing simultaneously and in harmony with the latest precepts in library planning for open stack branch libraries. The HABS survey of the Carnegie branches in Philadelphia showed Chestnut Hill Branch is a fine example of the T-shaped, open plan library form as developed by the Free Library of Philadelphia.

The Board of Trustees of the Free Library formed a Carnegie Fund Committee in March 1904 to oversee the details of this ambitious branch building effort. In response to a request from the Carnegie Fund Committee for instructions on how to select architects, the Board of Trustees implemented an ad hoc system. They sought to avoid the expense and complication of holding competitions so instead proposed to appoint an architect as branch sites were chosen. Selection seems to have been based on reputation and personal contacts, with some architects asking to be considered as work on the branches proceeded. The written record is thin on this point, but it seems apparent librarian John Thomson and assistant librarian John Ashhurst were instrumental in this process. John Thomson served as secretary of the Carnegie Fund Committee and the Free Library's leading staff member on all matters. Ashhurst's assistant librarian position was specifically created by the Board of Trustees "in order to undertake part of the very heavy extra work that would now be involved in carrying out the Andrew Carnegie Branch Library Building scheme."¹¹

In the interest of moving quickly to open new branch buildings, those projects launched earliest in the process were typically either on a readily available site or city-owned property. Since Carnegie's grants did not include funding for books, the committee's decisions also were influenced by the availability of a book collection that could simply be transferred to the new branch building, usually from an existing Free Library branch or donation/acquisition of a local library. Prior to the opening of the Free Library Chestnut Hill branch Carnegie building in 1909, the community had a local library run by the Christian Hall Library Association of Chestnut Hill. Local philanthropist Henry William built the Christian Hall Library in 1872. In 1876, library policy was changed to allow anyone to check out books without charge. In 1897 the trustees decided that the library should become a branch of the Free Library system.¹² In 1905 the Christian Hall Library Association offered the Free Library their library property as the location for a new Carnegie-funded building.¹³ The land was transferred to the city in March 1906.

Because the new Carnegie library was to occupy the same site as the existing library, plans were made to partially demolish the older building and continue library operations there

¹⁰ Abigail Van Slyck. *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 35-36.

¹¹ Free Library of Philadelphia, Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, (12 February 1904).

¹² History of Chestnut Hill Branch on the Free Library website at <http://libwww.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc=CHH>

¹³ Free Library of Philadelphia, *Tenth Annual Report* (1905), 15.

until a portion of the Carnegie building could be completed.¹⁴ This period was a productive and busy one for branch building by the Free Library. The Chestnut Hill branch was under construction at the same time as branch libraries in Manayunk and Wissahickon. The branches in Germantown, Holmesburg, and Spring Garden were also completed during 1907.¹⁵

The architects for the Chestnut Hill Branch, Cope and Stewardson, were one of Philadelphia's most prestigious firms at the turn of the century. The partnership was started sometime in 1885 by Walter Cope (1860-1902) and John Stewardson (1858-1896). Cope had been educated at Friends' School in Germantown, through apprenticeships, and at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He also conducted a study tour of England and France in 1884. Stewardson studied at Adams Academy in Quincy, Massachusetts, Harvard College, and the *Atelier Pascal* and *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Upon returning to Philadelphia in 1882 he worked in the offices of T. P. Chandler and then Furness & Evans. Cope and Stewardson were both founding members of the T-Square Club, active in the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and lecturers at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture. The firm designed many residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings, but was especially known for its academic buildings at the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Washington University in St. Louis, among others. While designing in many styles and architectural modes, through its collegiate work the firm became particularly identified with Gothic Revival design.¹⁶

Stewardson's younger brother Emlyn Stewardson (1863-1936) joined the firm around 1886 and was in charge of contracts and engineering. He was educated at Germantown Academy and received a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania in 1884. Emlyn Stewardson was also a member of the T-Square Club and the Philadelphia chapter of the AIA. He became more active with the firm after his brother's death in 1896 and continued the name after Cope's death in 1902. He was the senior member of the firm during the Chestnut Hill Branch project.¹⁷ Architect James P. Jamieson (1867-1941) was the chief designer after Cope's death, with Stewardson continuing his focus on contracts and engineering. Jamieson was born in Scotland and immigrated to the United States in 1884. He worked for various firms in Philadelphia and Minneapolis before joining Cope and Stewardson in 1889 as a draftsman. He continued his education with classes at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, and through winning a travel scholarship competition at the University of Pennsylvania. The scholarship enabled him to spend 1893-94 on an architectural study tour of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Greece. He returned to Cope and Stewardson and by 1900 he was a full partner in the firm. He was placed in charge of the firm's St. Louis office, established in 1901 to oversee

¹⁴ Free Library of Philadelphia, *Eleventh Annual Report* (1906), 23. The entire text of the land transfer agreement is included in Appendix D of this report.

¹⁵ Free Library of Philadelphia, *Twelfth Annual Report* (1907).

¹⁶ "Walter Cope," in Roger Moss and Sandra Tatman, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1984), 165-170; "John Stewardson," Moss and Tatman, 761. See also listings for both men in www.philadelphiabuildings.org and Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 139-140; 574.

¹⁷ "Emlyn Lamar Stewardson," in Moss and Tatman, 759-761; Withey and Withey, 573-574. In 1912 George B. Page became the partner in charge of design and the firm name was changed to Stewardson and Page.

construction for the Washington University campus. He split his time between St. Louis and Philadelphia until 1912, when he decided to remain in St. Louis and establish an independent firm. Jamieson was likely the chief designer of the Chestnut Hill Branch library.¹⁸

In April 1904 the Board of Trustees appointed the firm of Cope and Stewardson architects for the McPherson Square branch, which was to be the fourth Carnegie branch in the system. Progress on the McPherson Square branch stalled due to controversy with the Parks' Association and surrounding neighborhood. Cope and Stewardson was reassigned to design the Chestnut Hill branch sometime in 1905. The minutes of the October 1905 Carnegie Fund Committee meeting mention that they expected to receive a sketch plan of the Chestnut Hill Branch from Cope and Stewardson in a few days. In March 1906, Walter Rex of the Christian Hall Library Association had approved plans and the architects were instructed to proceed with finishing them and preparing for construction. These must have been preliminary plans despite the discussion of finishing them, because a few months later in July, the Committee meeting minutes again noted that the plans were approved by the Christian Hall Library Association and the Committee. As soon as the property transfer paperwork was complete, the firm of Cope and Stewardson was to prepare the specifications for contractor bidding. As built the Chestnut Hill Branch did not have a skylight like many of the other branch libraries and apparently this omission was cause for one last round of review before the contracts were awarded. After discussion it was determined to leave the plans as they are as "a skylight was not desirable in this instance."¹⁹

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted in December 1906 that a \$50,000 Carnegie Library with a "spacious lecture room" would be built in Chestnut Hill.²⁰ By the end of the month, the contracts for Chestnut Hill Branch were awarded. The Carnegie Fund Committee used a fairly consistent procedure for choosing contractors. The architect was asked to prepare the specifications and provide input on a list of invited bidders. As the branch construction project proceeded, the names of certain construction firms reappear several times as invited bidders. Separate contracts were awarded for general construction, heating, electricity, and plumbing. The bids were opened at a meeting of committee members on a designated date. The contracts were subsequently awarded to the lowest bidder, although occasionally changes to the specifications required revised bids. J. S. Cornell and Son received the general contract for \$30,129. Roberts Leinau received the heating and ventilating contract for \$4,574; D'Olier Engineering would install the electric lighting for \$1,570.²¹ The records do not indicate the amount or source of a plumbing bid; perhaps in this instance it was included in the general contract.

¹⁸ See entry for James P. Jamieson at www.philadelphiabuildings.org. This profile was written by Sandra Tatman.

¹⁹ Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (25 April 1904), 8; Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (13 October 1905); Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (6 March 1906); Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (24 July 1906); Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (16 November 1906).

²⁰ "Suburban Carnegie Library," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 December 1906, 8.

²¹ Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (28 December 1906). See also announcement of contract in "The Latest News in Real Estate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 December 1906.

In September 1905 the Carnegie Fund Committee had adopted a report on standardized recommendations to architects for heating the branch libraries. The “memorandum of instructions to architects to be followed by them in all Branch Library Buildings” read:

1. Steam coils to be placed all around the room beneath the bookcases, at a height of a couple of inches above the floor, and to occupy as much of the space now taken by the lower shelf of books as may be necessary.
2. Where lecture rooms are on the library floor and open directly out of the library the same system is to be adopted. This will render it possible at a future time to place wall shelving around the lecture room.
3. Basement lecture rooms to be treated individually.²²

Chestnut Hill Branch followed this model and the arrangement of radiators below the bookcases along the outer walls became standard for the Carnegie branches. At this same time, the open T-plan of the libraries was becoming more consistent, in keeping with the librarians’ programmatic concerns with flexible space and open sight lines for the small staff.

The rear ell portion of the library was built first, in order to avoid disrupting library service during construction. A cornerstone ceremony was held on September 13, 1907 when work began on the front section of the new library. Head librarian John Thomson gave a speech, as did James Jamieson as the library’s designer. An article announcing the ceremony included a rendering of its main façade and a brief description of the structure:

The building will be constructed of Chestnut Hill stone of the same color as that used in the old building. It will be one-story high with the library in front and the lecture room in the rear. The library room will measure 70 by 43 feet, and the lecture room 52 by 34 feet. The basement will contain boiler rooms, coal vaults, store rooms, lunch room, etc.. The lecture room will be used as a children’s room in the daytime.²³

This description is consistent with the basic library design formula developed for the Carnegie-funded branch libraries and also confirms that the gray stone exterior was intended to follow regional architectural traditions.

The plan to continue library operations hit a small snag when evening hours had to be discontinued due to a temporary lack of gaslight in the new structure, but overall the branch was only completely closed for a few days during construction. In April 1908, the library was briefly closed in order to shift books from the lecture hall to the front part of the new building. Although this branch was fully complete and functional by mid-1908, the official opening date is

²² Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (29 September 1905).

²³ “New Library Home for Chestnut Hill,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 September 1907, 14. See also “Library Cornerstone,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 September 1907, 5.

January 22, 1909, after passage of the required city council ordinance. The total cost of construction was \$43,636.60.²⁴

The William Rau photographs of Chestnut Hill branch published in the 1908 Free Library *Annual Report* show the handsome stone library situated close to Germantown Avenue and enclosed behind an iron fence. A group of young patrons is posing on the front steps. For the interior view, the large and open library space is occupied by a pair of women librarians at the central desk, a variety of adult patrons in the main room, and younger patrons visible in the children's reading room/lecture room at rear. The side lecture room entrance is shown as well as what appears to be a curtain that could be drawn closed across the opening between the two sections. Low shelves and desks divide the large spaces into more intimate areas while taller bookshelves line the outer walls under the windows.

Chestnut Hill represents an early example of the open plan, T-shaped library that became common for the Carnegie-funded Free Library branches. The Philadelphia approach shares a number of features with Carnegie Libraries nationwide. In 1917 author Theodore Wesley Koch pointed out that a large room undivided by partitions became a defining feature of Carnegie branches across the country, as was providing a space for lectures. He notes that the lecture program was particularly successful in Philadelphia, where "each branch has a recognized clientele and lecturers are always sure of a good sized audience."²⁵ Chestnut Hill had a particularly substantial side lecture room entrance with its own foyer and a projection booth above. In her study of the Carnegie Library, architectural historian Abigail Van Slyck discusses the contemporaneous struggle within the library profession over conflicting philosophies of restricting access to reading material and newer ideals of community involvement.²⁶ Chestnut Hill and other Philadelphia libraries demonstrate a progressive commitment to open stack branches, but also a desire to control this public space. Here opposing impulses were balanced by stationing the main librarians' desk in front of the entrance where patrons could be observed by the staff. This arrangement was used in all of the Free Library Carnegie branches and continues today.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Chestnut Hill branch library is an early-twentieth-century Georgian Revival structure built of gray local stone set in a random ashlar pattern. The library stands one story high on a raised basement. It is a T-shaped structure with a horizontal main block and a short ell projecting from the center of the rear. The formal entrance is in the central bay of the front façade. A modern addition is attached to the rear façade of the original structure, but is otherwise separate from the historic library.

²⁴ Free Library of Philadelphia, *Twelfth Annual Report* (1907), 20-21; Free Library of Philadelphia, *Thirteenth Annual Report* (1908), 21; Photograph of Chestnut Hill with cost figures on reverse in Director's Vault, Central Branch, Free Library of Philadelphia.

²⁵ Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries*, (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1917), 86.

²⁶ Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 122.

2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The front, or main block, of this T-plan building is five bays wide and three bays deep. The ell portion of the original structure is four (smaller) bays wide and two bays deep.

2. Foundation: Chestnut Hill Branch sits on an approximately four foot high foundation of gray stone laid in a random ashlar pattern. The transition from foundation to the walls is demarcated by a carved limestone water table.

3. Walls: Chestnut Hill Branch features gray random ashlar fieldstone walls typical of Georgian and Georgian Revival structures in the Philadelphia area. On the main block the stones are more finely dressed; larger and darker stones create quoins at the corners. Below the windows spandrel panels are created by alternating recessed and projecting courses of stone in a rectangular pattern. The combination of panels below round arch window openings with projecting piers in between gives the façade the appearance of a Classical arcade. The stones are smaller and more roughly dressed in the ell portion of the structure. A flat, smooth limestone belt course appears level with the top edge of the windows.

4. Structural system, framing: Chestnut Hill Branch library has load bearing stone masonry walls supported on a stone foundation. The large trusses used to support the roof and span the open reading room spaces are hidden by the plaster ceiling.

5. Main entry pavilion: The main entrance is indicated by a projecting one-story stone pavilion topped by a low parapet. The front of the entry pavilion features limestone decorative motifs such a pair of engaged Ionic columns on each side of the doorway, Classical entablature, and a turned limestone balustrade at the front of the parapet. "The Free Library of Philadelphia Chestnut Hill Branch" is carved into the frieze above the doorway. The doorway is accessed via six stone steps flanked by knee walls and curved wrought iron hand rails.

"Lecture Room" entry pavilion: This one-story front gable entry pavilion projects from the south or side elevation of the ell near where it joins the main block. It is also constructed of random ashlar fieldstone with larger stones creating quoins at the corners. This pavilion is accessed by a low stair.

6. Chimney: The chimney for the basement boiler room is located on the north façade at the junction between the main block and ell. The chimney is sheathed with random ashlar fieldstone with quoins at the corners.

7. Openings

a. Doorways and Doors: The main entry has a pair of wood doors with glazing on the top half and a pair of horizontal panels on the bottom. The door is surrounded by a plain, wide limestone molding and set into the center of the Neoclassical main entrance pavilion described above.

The “lecture room” entry doorway is a round arch opening with a limestone keystone and spring blocks. The door is set directly into the wall with larger stones forming quoins at the edges. The words “LECTURE ROOM” are carved into the wood lintel. A half circle fan light with radiating muntins sits above the door. Access here is through a pair of wood panel doors with glazing in the top half.

The modern addition has a glass and steel door at the rear.

b. Windows:

The main block of the library has round arch windows set directly into the stone walls with a limestone sill and a continuation of the belt course along the upper arched portion. A limestone keystone is placed in the belt course above each window. The wood sash features a modified Palladian form with a wider mullion creating the appearance of thin side lights and a stacked arch above. The large rectangular portion of the sash has twenty over twenty small, almost square, lights. On the ell the large rectangular windows are twenty-one over twenty-one double hung wood sash with a simple wood sill and frame.

8. Roof: The Chestnut Hill Branch library has a hipped roof covered with slate shingles. The closed cornice has dentils in the eaves.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Chestnut Hill branch library has a T-shaped plan with minimal interior partitions on the main level. It is a bright and airy space with high ceilings. Originally low shelves served to demarcate different departments within the library (children’s, reference) while still allowing personnel at the central desk to see the entire space. Some private work spaces have been created by walls approximately seven feet high along the south side of the main room. The original circulation pattern of patrons entering through the entrance vestibule and walking around the central charging desk to enter and exit is still in use although the original desk, rails, gates and other fixtures have been replaced.

The side, or lecture room, entrance allowed access directly to the ell room after crossing a small lobby. This room is also a large, undivided space with high ceilings. Access to the modern addition is through this space.

The basement is largely unexcavated under the main room, with staff spaces such as a kitchen, lunchroom and bathrooms under the ell.

2. Stairway: It is not clear where a historic stairway to access the basement level would have been located – perhaps on the rear façade where the modern addition now stands. There is no

evidence of a stairway in the lecture room entrance vestibule, where it is often located in other Philadelphia Carnegie libraries.

3. Flooring: The floors are now covered by modern carpet inside the main spaces. The original material is unknown. The two entrance vestibules have square red terra cotta tile floors.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceiling are plain plaster painted off-white. The ceiling is coved with a thin cornice. The only ceiling opening is a square hatch, perhaps to provide roof access.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

Main entrance: There is an entry vestibule which is flanked by two tan marble plaques set into round arch niches commemorating the donation of the land and the building funds for the library. One plaque reads "This Building Was Given To The City Of Philadelphia By Andrew Carnegie Esq. To Be Used For Ever As The Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia. MCMVII [1907]" Facing that plaque on the other side of the entrance vestibule is another which reads "The Land Originally Given By Henry J. Williams ESQ And On Which This Building Is Erected Was Presented To the City By The Christian Hall Library Company of Chestnut Hill For The Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia. MCMVII [1907]" A pair of swinging wood doors with glazing on the top half allows access to the library. From the interior, the wood frame of the entry vestibule features Doric pilasters and an entablature with dentils.

Lecture room entrance: This vestibule includes a closet and access to a projection room in the upper part of the entry pavilion. The opening to the ell of the library is a simple wood frame opening with a pair of swinging wood doors with glazing in the top half.

The large rectangular opening between the main room and ell is unornamented except for simple scroll brackets creating a modified cornice with the ceiling cove on the ell side. These brackets may have originally held a rod for a large curtain.

Two modern glass and steel doors at the rear of the ell allow access to the addition.

b. Windows: The windows are set directly into the walls without additional interior trim or moldings.

c. Projector opening: Now a simple square opening on the south wall of the ell room, the interior photograph in the 1908 Free Library *Annual Report* indicates a more elaborate balcony with wood balustrade.

6. Decorative features and trim: Painted wood book shelves line the outer walls up to the bottom of the windows. These are either original or similar and have adjustable shelves. This arrangement was typical for the Philadelphia branch libraries and allowed maximum use of wall space for shelves while still allowing for considerable natural light.

7. Hardware: N/A

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: It is likely that the original boiler system has been replaced. Radiators are located along the outer walls below the book shelves and covered by simple metal grilles.

b. Lighting: Currently replacement fluorescent lighting is located on the ceiling. The interior photograph in the 1908 Free Library *Annual Report* indicates that a series of five Georgian Revival chandeliers with round globes hung from the main room ceiling. These appear to be a mix of gas and electric light. In addition, sconces with one up and one down round globe were mounted along the top edge of the outer wall book shelves.

A pair of gaslight standards flanking the exterior entrance is no longer extant.

c. Plumbing: The library would have been built with basic bathroom and kitchen facilities, which have now been upgraded.

D. Site: The library's status as a public institution is communicated by its site placement in a small fenced yard close to Germantown Avenue, a major thoroughfare in this part of Philadelphia. The fence appears to be original.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings: Drawings have not been located for this structure,

B. Early Views: William Rau photographs (one exterior and one interior) in 1908 Free Library *Annual Report*.

An elevation rendering of the proposed library appeared in "New Library Home for Chestnut Hill," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 September 1907, 14.

C. Bibliography

The records of the Free Library of Philadelphia are located at the Central Library on Vine Street. The *Annual Reports* are located in the Municipal Reference Division, Cities P53-1154; and the Carnegie Fund Committee Minute Books are located in the Director's Vault (access by special permission).

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PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Chestnut Hill Branch Library was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief, during summer 2007 as part of a larger initiative to record the Carnegie funded branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The project is sponsored by HABS in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, John A. Gallery, director; and the Free Library of Philadelphia, William J. Fleming, Administrative Services Director, and made possible through a Congressional appropriation for recording in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The historical reports were prepared by Lisa P. Davidson and Catherine C. Lavoie. Large-format photography was undertaken for HABS by Joseph Elliott.